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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
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INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SINGAPORE 000534

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KDEM PGOV SN

SUBJECT: BLOGGERS DEMAND INTERNET FREEDOM

REF: A. SINGAPORE 379

- ¶B. SINGAPORE 362
- ¶C. SINGAPORE 251
- ¶D. SINGAPORE 247
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- ¶F. SINGAPORE 233

¶11. (U) Thirteen Singaporean bloggers submitted proposals for increased internet freedom to the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) in late April. The proposals called for a change in the law that requires registration of political- or religious-focused websites. The bloggers, including media professor Cherian George and activist Alex Au, argued that citizen committees should regulate online content, citing other citizen committees that play a role in deciding what films, publications, and theater productions are permitted to be shown or distributed in Singapore.

GOS Response

¶12. (U) In its May 5 response, the GOS assured the group of bloggers that "we have been reviewing our light-touch approach and are considering how we could take a lighter-touch approach." This assurance follows Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's statement last month that the GOS is reviewing the regulations covering new media and will update the regulations before the next election in 2011.

Satire on the Web

¶13. (SBU) The February escape of detainee Mas Selamat Kastari gave bloggers a chance to push the envelope of the current regulations (reftels). Blogs, such as Talking Cock and Mr. Brown, included sarcastic updates on the as-yet-fruitless search for Kastari. Talking Cock provided its readers with a "Terrorist Spotter": Kastari's mug shot in a variety of different disguises including a blonde wig and a pirate cap. Talking Cock's website also includes "Pac Mat," a version of Pac-Man in which players, as Kastari, try to escape Singapore's military and police (after seven levels of evading increasingly responsive military and police forces, Kastari is inevitably caught by Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew).

¶14. (SBU) Comment: While the GOS has been notably silent about bloggers' responses to the Kastari escape, this is likely an effort on their part to avoid drawing more derision. Neither the government's silence in the past few months nor the promised "lighter-touch approach" suggest that a loosening of Internet restrictions is imminent. End comment.

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